

Frankfort Police Department History

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1812 - 1900

In the decade following the War of 1812, Frankfort's chief law enforcement officer was referred to as a town sergeant who received his instructions from a city board of trustees. He enforced a wide range of ordinances, many of which had little to do with preserving public order.

At various times the board charged the sergeant to ascertain public opinion regarding sidewalks, to warn storekeepers against selling liquor to slaves, to have nuisances removed from the streets, and to notify property owners who had allowed stagnant water to stand on their premises and that they were subject to fines.

The local police authority remained in the hands of a town sergeant until 1831 when Massie Franklin was appointed Captain of Patrol.

By 1835, under a new incorporation act, a "town marshal" replaced the Captain of Patrol as Frankfort's chief law enforcement officer.

With the support of his deputies he was to patrol the town daily and to be vigilant in detecting retailers of spirits without license and keepers of disorderly houses; to arrest all persons engaged in the commission of any riot, unlawful assembly, or breach of the peace; and generally to enforce all other ordinances involving everything from tax collection to removal of nuisances. A Watchman was appointed annually to reinforce the town marshal at night.

In 1870, the city marshal was Humphrey J. Hyde. In the early 1880s, 35 year old Jerry Lee was appointed marshal. Jerry Lee was killed in the line of duty on September 10, 1882, after responding to a disturbance call at the Frankfort Hotel on Main Street. Chief Lee was shot after answering a second disturbance call between two citizens.

In August of 1871, Captain William Gilmore, Officers Jerry Lee and Dick Leonard responded to a riot on Broadway in downtown Frankfort. Election polls had closed and groups of individuals divided by race had engaged in shooting at each other from across the railroad tracks on Broadway. Captain William Gilmore was killed and Officers Lee and Leonard were injured. After an arrest for the shooting of Captain Gilmore, the person accused of the shooting was hanged by a mob within a few hours of being placed in jail. These riots were examples of bitter race relations, which had been building during this period.

The last recorded line of duty death occurred on February 14, 1896. Captain Henry Brown and Officer Will Gordon responded to a disturbance at U. Kagin's saloon on Broadway. While trying to arrest the drunken patron, Captain Brown was shot five times. Officer Gordon shot the drunken patron three times. Captain Brown and his killer both died within minutes. Captain Henry Brown had served as a detective and had been a member of the police force for thirty-eight years.

Throughout the 1890s ordinances referred to police officers as "Watchmen". From 1891 to 1894, B.B. Jeffers was chief. From 1894 to 1901 the chief of police was Mace Williams.

1900-Present

In 1901, Yuba D. Mangan was police chief and eight or ten men were hired to maintain law and order. The department had a regular patrol wagon, which was kept at a Main Street livery stable. The wagon was known as "Tilda" and, before the days of the siren, a ding-dong bell was used as the vehicle raced through the streets.

During the early 1900s the city had both a marshal and police chief. The City Marshal position remained in effect until 1913, when the city council abolished the position and transferred the marshal's duties to the police chief. In 1903, the department consisted of a police chief and eight officers.

By the 1920s, there were only three squad cars, none of which were equipped with radios. Police Headquarters was on Main Street in the Capitol Theatre building.

If a call would come into headquarters, a blue light would be flashing just outside of the window of the department upstairs. This was the only way to notify the cruisers.

Later, there were red signal lights on Main and Broadway. The light was tuned on from headquarters to notify the men that they need to report in to the police station. Some of the officers at the time were named Stafford, Taylor, Brawner, Wilhelm and Lillis.

Following many years of service by Chief Mangan, Crawford Lee served as chief from 1926 until 1935.

Edward M. Davis served as Frankfort Police chief from 1936 to 1939. He established the Frankfort School Boy Patrol, was instrumental in the formation of a local Traffic Safety Council, and initiated a retirement system for policemen. Davis left the Frankfort Police Department for a career with the FBI, retiring in New Orleans.

Guy Wainscott was chief from 1939 to 1949. By 1949, the department consisted of a police chief, assistant chief, four sergeants, four corporals and four officers. The department had two radio equipped squad cars and two radio equipped motorcycles.

In 1949, Henry Morrow was appointed chief of police. During the 1950s the police department had sixteen officers. The beginning salary was \$210 a month. The department furnished a badge but officers had to buy their uniforms and .38 Smith & Wesson revolvers. Officers got one day off a week and worked holidays and overtime for no pay. Two men cruised together for two hours and walked for two hours while two others rode together.

The department had three cars. If all cars were out of commission they might use taxi-cabs. Most of their excitement occurred in the dimly lit streets of the Crow with such colorful spots as the Peachtree Inn, The Blue Moon, the Sky Blue Inn, the Tip Toe Inn, and the Rendezvous.

On January 27, 1954 after serving as assistant chief for five years, William C. Wash was appointed chief of police.

By 1956 the city's population growth warranted its elevation to the status of a second class city. In November of the same year, voters overwhelmingly approved the current city manager commission form of government.

On July 16, 1961, Edward L. Conway was named police chief. Conway served until May 31, 1968.

Population increases and annexations continued to fuel growth of the police department. By the mid-sixties, the Frankfort Police consisted of thirty officers, four police cars, two patrol ambulances and three three-wheeled motorcycles to aid in the growing problem of traffic control. The radio frequency was shared by the county sheriff's office.

Douglas True was chief of police from 1968 to 1977. During his tenure plans were made to convert an old grocery store site on Second Street to a new police department building. The police department had moved from the old City Hall on Main Street to the new Municipal Building at 315 West Second Street in 1958.

On November 10, 1977 Lt. Ben Harney of the Dry Ridge Post of the Kentucky State Police was named chief. Harney served until 1983.

Ted W. Evans was named chief on May 31, 1983. Evans had been with the Libertyville, Ill. Police Department for eleven years before coming to Frankfort. Evans was instrumental in introducing community policing concepts to the department and oversaw many changes during his tenure.

On January 1, 2004, Walter M. Wilhoite was named to succeed Chief Evans.

CHIEF OF POLICE

- 1831-1835 Massey Franklin (Captain of Patrol)
- 1844- 1880 Humphrey J. Hyde
- 1880-1882 Jerry Lee (City Marshal/ Chief of Police)
- 1891-1894 B.B. Jeffers
- 1894-1901 Mace Williams
- 1901-1926 Yuba D. Mangan
- 1926-1935 Crawford Lee
- 1935-1939 Edward M. (Buck) Davis
- 1939-1949 Guy Wainscott
- 1949-1954 Henry Morrow
- 1954-1961 William C. Wash
- 1961-1968 Edward L. Conway
- 1968-1977 Douglas True
- 1977-1983 Ben Harney
- 1983-2004 Ted W. Evans

- 2005- present Walter M. Wilhoite

SOURCES:

All material for this page came from a State Journal article dated October 8, 2006, written by Russell Hatter, Assistant Curator Capital City Museum and The History of the Frankfort Police Department, a monograph written by Detective Jeffery Fogg, 2004.